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# THE PRICE OF THE PRESENT PAID BY THE PAST:

A POEM

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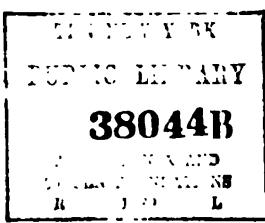
## THE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT,

IN THE CITY OF WHEELING, *May*, 1881.

BY  
WILLIAM LEIGHTON.

WHEELING:  
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

1881.  
W.L.



# THE PRICE OF THE PRESENT PAID BY THE PAST.

## I.

WHERE once Troy stood no monument appears;  
But Homer's song survives the perished years—  
'Tis older than the oldest thing we know,  
To honor men by building up a pile  
Of monumental stone: ay, long ago,  
Ere history began, beside the Nile  
The sons of Egypt built a pyramid  
Unto their king—the dust of ages hid  
His name. May this carved granite, happily,

Proclaim our honored ones enduringly:  
Or if time levels all that mankind rears,  
May this fair stone endure as many years  
As the lone Sphinx hath sat in Egypt's sand,  
Or as the oldest pyramid shall stand.  
But when harsh years these crumbling stones decay,  
The deeds they honor shall not pass away:  
A stronger record holds each hero's name,  
And deathless stars forever hymn his fame;  
For while Eternal Goodness rules o'er men  
Each higher act employs an angel's pen.

## II.

PROSPERITY, thy hand  
Hath touched Dame Fortune's wheel; and, lo!  
Forth in profusion pours the flow  
Of plenty in the land.  
We hear the cheerful din arise



From busy workshops; and our eyes  
Behold the ponderous railroad train,  
Laden with freight of western grain,  
Go puffing through our valley to the sea.  
  
Our produce, borne to eastern strands,  
Feeds hungry mouths in starving lands  
Wasted by blight of sad adversity.  
  
From Ireland came pale Famine's wail;  
Nor did it cry without avail;  
Forth from our shores the succors sped  
To fill those starving mouths with bread,  
And still the cries that called so piteously.

III.

In famous days long past  
Rome built an empire vast  
Where'er a conqueror's sword her mighty armies led:  
Now a new power is born;

We send the nations corn;  
And, in the place of war, fill foreign lands with bread.

## IV.

THE produce of our fields  
Through commerce richly yields  
No stinted store:  
France sends her fabrics fair;  
England, her skill-wrought ware;  
No land but yields its share;  
And Ocean deigns to bear  
The tribute to our shore.  
Though winds and waters roar,  
And Neptune bellows o'er his stormy main,  
His anger is in vain;  
The power of steam defies his wrath,  
And cuts through tossing waves a path,  
Bringing of all the best

To our great Nation of the West:  
While deep below his noisy seas,  
Through the long wire, come messages  
That friendly greetings bring  
From many an old-world king  
To crownless kings that hold our new-world sovereignties.

v.

WHILE other lands by want oppressed  
Cry hungrily,  
Here are our hearts with plenty blessed;  
And Liberty  
Her ægis o'er our nation flings,  
While Peace, her gentle sister, brings  
Her golden ministry:  
And all the perils of the past,  
That War around our hearth-stones cast,  
Have ceased to be,

That the bright goddess of the free,  
Leaning upon her sword, may stand  
And view a happy, prosperous land  
Stretched broadly out from sea to sea.

## VI.

Not boastfully  
Of these, our blessings, let us tell;  
Nor proud conceit our bosoms swell;  
But thankfully  
For all the kindness Heaven hath sent,  
For all the bounties God hath lent,  
Let our glad hearts declare  
That we His grateful children are.

VII.

PEACE and content—

Far other were those fiercer days

When all the nation was ablaze,

And our dear land by inward ravage rent.

Ah, not yet wholly healed,

The painful, gaping wounds that then were made

When brother 'gainst his brother stood arrayed

On many a bloody field,

And War unloosed his iron-throated dogs to tear

With angry strife;

Nor Pity's voice could make the cruel cannon spare

One human life!

VIII.

WAR cried unceasingly,

Like the fierce Aztec deity,

"Heap up for me,  
High on my bloody shrine, the promise of the land—  
The bravest and the best the country hath;  
Send forth a chosen band  
Each day to feed my burning wrath!"

## IX.

AND they went forth—  
Alas, full dearly did we pay  
For the prosperity that smiles to-day!—  
And North and South,  
With the best blood in all the land, made red  
The battle-fields where their brave soldiers bled,  
And heaped the earth with dead.

## X.

HARK to each heavy peal  
As cannon shots resound;

Even the strong hills reel  
And tremble with the sound!—  
Now through the rifts of smoke-clouds see  
The gleaming lines go by,  
And battle-flags that o'er them fly,  
Torn by sharp rifle-shots and the death-winged artillery.  
Disordered by that dreadful rain  
Are all the glittering lines;  
But o'er them sweeps the smoke again,  
On which the sunlight shines,  
Painting the veil that hides the dead  
With beauty to the eye;  
But, ah! beneath, the earth is red  
With tint of deeper dye.

XI.

STRETCHED on his hospital cot  
When fever racked each wasted limb,—

O hapless lot!—  
Weary were days and nights with him;  
    Or, far away  
From his lone bed of woe and pain,  
Remembrance led him home again,  
Guiding the weary soldier's wandering  
Where memory had a magic charm to bring  
    Again the day  
When, from his friends and home departing,  
A mother's tears fell on his cheek,  
Telling the love she could not speak  
    For sobbing;  
Or loving lips were pressed to his  
In tender farewell of a kiss  
    That memory  
Had treasured from that hour to this  
    How fondly!

XII.

THAT home he never more may see,  
Save in hot fever's phantasy ;  
But in his cot of pain alone  
Must yield up life with dying moan ;  
No friendly ear to hear the sighs,  
His last of earthly sorrowing,  
Ere, rising on its heavenly wing,  
Homeward at last his spirit flies.

XIII.

AND shall I tell  
Of all the hardships that befell,—  
The cruel tortures of the heart and brain,  
Famine, and pain,—  
Him whose sad fate  
Bade him a prisoner long remain,

Sadly to wait  
The turning of his prison key,  
To wait and sigh for liberty !

XIV.

So suffered they  
Whose monument we dedicate to-day.  
  
War's iron rain,  
Fever, and pain,  
The weary waiting, and the galling chain  
Of dull imprisonment,  
With sundered ties of home, and banishment—  
All these did they endure that we  
More fortunate might be ;  
  
And broad o'er all the land,  
From east to western strand,  
Our country might be blessed with glad prosperity.

XV.

THEN let no niggard meed  
Of honor grace each deed  
    So bravely done  
On every battle-field whose name,  
Engraven here, records the fame  
    Our countrymen have won;  
That patriots yet to be,—  
    While still within the land  
        Such monuments shall stand,—  
May bless the memory  
Of those who freely gave  
Their blood and lives to save  
And keep our nation great and glorious still,  
And free, and indivisible.

## XVI.

So may the future days  
Come nobly to our State:  
When, prosperous and great,  
Her citizens shall praise  
Those who gave life and all to consecrate  
Their land to liberty;  
And bade their watchword be  
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To freemen ever dear,  
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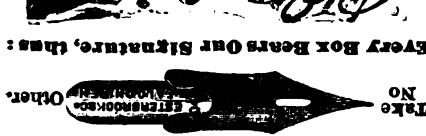
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